

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3

INTRODUCED BY R. LAIBLE

BY REQUEST OF THE EDUCATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERIM COMMITTEE

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA REQUESTING AN INTERIM STUDY TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MONTANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; AND REQUIRING THAT THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY BE REPORTED TO THE 62ND LEGISLATURE.

WHEREAS, scholarship programs should provide financial incentives as a reward for good academic performance, promote academic success by requiring completion of a rigorous high school core curriculum, and keep Montana's best and brightest in the state to pursue postsecondary education opportunities; and

WHEREAS, only one in two Montana high school graduates go on to college; and

WHEREAS, less than one in five higher education students get a 4-year degree from the Montana University System in 4 years; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, Montana ranks only 38th in terms of state funding per student; and

WHEREAS, Montana's current student financial aid portfolio is loan-driven, but student access to higher education comes more from grants than loans; and

WHEREAS, the affordability and accessibility of higher education is emphasized in the first "shared policy goal" agreed to by the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Montana Board of Regents, and the Postsecondary Education Policy and Budget Interim Subcommittee of the Montana Legislature.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to:

(1) prepare a comprehensive inventory and description of the financial assistance programs available to Montana students; and

(2) study the possibility of consolidating the state funds that are currently dedicated to Baker Grants,

1 Montana Higher Education Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Perkins Loans, Governor's
2 Postsecondary Scholarships, and Montana University System Honors Scholarships into one centrally
3 administered comprehensive Montana Scholarship Program.

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this study also consider if and how:

5 (1) student financial aid that is currently derived from waivers and university foundations might also
6 support a Montana Scholarship Program; and

7 (2) nontraditional students, including displaced workers, trying to reenter the educational system might
8 also use a Montana Scholarship Program; and

9 (3) the Board of Regents, Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana University System,
10 Superintendent of Public Instruction, Board of Public Education, and members of the public can be fully engaged
11 in this study.

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that if the study is assigned to staff, any findings or conclusions be
13 presented to and reviewed by an appropriate committee designated by the Legislative Council.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all aspects of the study, including presentation and review
15 requirements, be concluded prior to September 15, 2010.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the final results of the study, including any findings, conclusions,
17 comments, or recommendations of the appropriate committee, be reported to the 62nd Legislature.

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